The Ong's Hat Mystery Revealed: An Interview with Joseph Matheny

Deep in the New Jersey Pine Barrens an odd assortment of renegade scientists and ontological dissidents/adventurers set up an ashram and conducted experiments with a brain-machine known as "the egg." Eventually, these experiments led to the opening of a gateway to another dimension: "On the other side of the Gate we found a Pine Barrens similar to ours but in a world which apparently never developed human life. Of course we have since visited a number of other worlds, but we decided to colonize this one, our first Newfoundland. We still live in the same scattering of weather-grey shacks, airstream trailers, recycled chicken coops, and mail order yurts, only a bit more spread out - and considerably more relaxed."

Or at least that's what two mysterious documents - *Incunabula: A Catalog of Rare Books, Manuscripts & Curiosa, Conspiracy Theory, Frontier Science & Alternative Worlds* and *Ong's Hat: Gateway to the Dimensions* - imply and claim.

The Ong's Hat meme - and its curious and intoxicating blend of quantum physics, tantric sex, chaos magick/theory, parallel universes, and conspiracy theory - has spread through the noosphere over the last decade or so and developed into a mini-mythos, eventually transmitting itself through such mass media portals as Coast to Coast AM (the Art Bell show) and *Jane Magazine*, even becoming the starting point for successful alternate reality game Chasing the Wish.

Who better to abduct and probe for information about the Ong's Hat mystery than Joseph Matheny, the author of the only book (*Ong's Hat: The Beginning*) on the subject?

New World Disorder: For our readers who may not know about it, could you give an overview of the Ong's Hat mystery and how you got involved/interested in it?

Joseph Matheny: The Incunabula catalog is a culture jam, created by culture jammers. There is no 'group' that existed previous to 1987, at least not as described in the brochure. 4 people got together in the 80s and 90s and put those documents together. NONE preceded their existence. However, many legends and synchronicities have occurred since. That is beautiful and indicative of a responsive universe.

One was an artist, who made beautiful, moving and otherworldly collages and pictures.
One was a poetic terrorist who could weave words together with an unparallel passion and vigor.
Another was a media and network hacker who could make the media pay attention to a bingo match in Poughkeepsie if he wanted them to.
One was a physicist with lots of friends in the *Dancing Wu Li* master circles and a wonderfully twisted sense of sexual humor.

They decided one day to take some pre-existing fiction bits, stir in some current pop science, parody of paranormal conspiracy literature and graffiti it on the walls of the noosphere. Boys will be boys after all. Over the years, others in certain academic circles were brought in to work on updating and upgrading the concepts employed and to integrate the lesson learned into other projects, some of which are currently underway.

Three of them (the latter 3) made a verbal pact:

Never let it be used to start a cult.
Never let it be used as a platform to piss down the back of anyone who gave blood, sweat and tears to make it realized.
If a channel became available that made it more accessible to more people and money was involved, always give the money away (aka charity).
When and if it all becomes too much to manage, toss it into the public domain via a free game or something like that.

It fell to the third to complete the mission.
This was called stage 3.
Done.

And so, a teeth grinding obsession for a pathetic few and a fun run for an intelligent and vast majority was born. I was lucky enough to be a rather conspicuous fly on the wall to a lot of this.

So, it comes down to 2 camps.

One, the majority view as what it was meant to be, a joke that should have flamed out a few years ago. This majority includes the creators who in an attempt to get it through to those that clearly have missed the obvious, put out the heretical inc5 and 6 in a collaborative effort to re-inject some levity into the situation. If you have missed the point that it is a joke you have missed THE point.

Another, a vocal and persistent minority that will resort to any low road tactic they deem necessary to preserve the fundamentalist view in an effort to perpetuate a cockeyed religion based on something that was intended to be the polar opposite of such. Even when being repeatedly told this point blank some elements of this cadre of "believers" resort to elaborate schemes of deceit and denial. Believers will be believers after all. ;)

The OTHER answer (cue spooky music):

When MKULTRA was exposed, THEY had to resort to other means to secure budgets (think Iran-Contra and Air America).They also had to subcontract most of their projects out to third parties but under black budget cloaks to keep them alive but hidden. (Think $2,000.00 toilet seats for bombers, etc.)

One of those contracts was handed to a group of cultural engineers. Their mission: build a better mousetrap. The results produced by this ad hoc think tank was labeled, "The Incunabula." The name was chosen for several reasons, one of which was its phonetic ominousness and relative obscurity in the everyday vernacular. Another was its link to mysterious texts, which the creators observed, seemed to be a common obsession among certain personality types that were representative of the target demographic.

The kernel of this conceptual operating system was a framework structure that would allow scalability in the future so that yet unseen cultural modules could be put into place within the framework, meeting trends and fads as they emerged. To put it in layman's terms, it was designed to be upgraded. The goal was to create a strange loop/strange attractor scenario that was so addictive that users would act like heroin junkies if faced with the prospect of being cut off.

Needless to say, they used the emerging medium of computer networks, enhanced by a mytho-poetic connection to Xerox pamphlets, to deliver the payload to the pre selected demographic.

This model has now been tested, perfected and enhanced a bit. The latest version was delivered to JPL for social group simulator testing and then handed off to several prominent computer game companies to utilize in upcoming console, PC and cellphone games to be released starting this year. It is a model that is designed to be addictive, circular (leading nowhere while always promising to lead somewhere) and results in madness in the user after extended exposure. Think of it as a virtual asylum that the inmates willingly enter. Attract/Entrap/Entrain. What better scenario can be imagined? The elegance from a design perspective is exquisite! If the Entrainment or "Exit Strategy" part of the program is unsuccessful the Entrapment mode is still in place around the subject. No need for physical asylums! Hooray! A budgetary success as well!

Some say that some of the people responsible for The Stanford Prison Experiment were involved. Others say that members of the Black Lodge were involved as well as the Aviary. The Aviary member in charge is known as The Crow. No reference to that name in connection to the Aviary can be found though.

Now, behold! The projects greatest triumph: Lisa Agnes Gardner:

> *Take this shitty thing *off* of me right now. I *detest it* and the people inside of it, who treat me like a *sack of shit*!*
>
> *I want this mother fucking *piece of crap* off of me immediately!~ Then people in it seem to have their IQ's halfed after being in it for a while, and they become brutal and willing to mistreat completely the 'wearer' of the hat.*
>
> **I never signed up to have this fucking thing on me*! It just came upon me *unasked for*!*
>
> *I have gotten maybe 10 hours or so sleep in then last three days and I have a new baby to care for! Does this government want me dead or decaying?*
>
> *There is a John Michale Gannon in this place who tells me that he is going to 'kidnap my four month old baby' and 'sell him' for millions of dollars.*
>
> *My baby has a very special thigh, and it seems that some in the United States want to sell that thighbone to Great Britain.*

> *This country with its continual government and corporate pushings and pullings into my mind is *treating me like shit*. *I will start looking into moving to other places on this planet*, *with my two sons* - if these places are willing to offer me asylum from this continual psychic harrassment and mind control research bullshit.*
>
> *Yesterday I was told that the gov wants to keep me doing this because 'you shovel shit so well'.*
>
> **What the fuck did I do to deserve this*?*
>
> ***I hate George Bush and this administration with a passion for what they are doing to me** and the fact that this administration continues to let me burn in Gehenna year after year after year, without seeing fit to do anything about it.*
>
> *I don't have the money or resources (or even the sleep time) available right now to work on engaging a lawyer myself. I would like to see the gov do the right thing by me. The first thing I would like to see them do is to *get rid of this **Ong's Hat** bullshit* - get it the fuck off of my head, I never signed up to wear it and I don't know why it is on my head. -*

Lisa was seen in a Monterey cafe recently, holding up a Buzz Lightyear doll and screaming: "To the brink of madness, and beyond!"

That you will read this and continue on your current path of discovery is only further, though insignificant, testament to the robustness of the design.

NWD: A computer program called "The Metamachine" is referred to throughout the Ong's Hat book. What is it?

JM: That's a hard question to answer briefly, but let me try. First of all, let me begin by saying, many have misinterpreted what my method and intention behind this ongoing experiment has been. Secondly, there's been one or two hacks out there that have taken a very brief synopsis that I have given them and tried to "scoop" the story, so to speak, by rushing out with pages of wild speculation and agenda driven pish-posh. Let's lay that all to rest now, shall we? First of all, the MetaMachine is simply the upgrading or furtherance of works that have preceded it. I originally came up with the seeds of the ideas expressed therein when I read Herman Hesse's *Glass Bead Game* at an early age. I thought to myself, "Great ideas here. I wonder if it could actually be executed?" As time progressed, I began to keep a journal of ideas for a software version of such a machine, with other ideas attached along the way. I was lucky enough to have a telephone relationship with William Burroughs before he passed away and got some deeper insight into the cut-up experiments that he and Brion Gysin did in Tangiers. (Read *Here to Go* for more details). Then I came into contact with what's known as relative databases. Relative databases are those that can record relationships in varying degrees between data bits and data sets. Then the piece of the puzzle that sent me over the edge was Nick Herbert's Metaphase Typewriter experiments (as outlined in the forward to *Ong's Hat: The Beginning*). What I was looking for was a method to access the Meta Data of the human morphogenetic resonance field (as defined and demonstrated by the work of Rupert Sheldrake). If you are unfamiliar with the concept of metadata, you can familiarize your self here: http://www.csc.noaa.gov/metadata/text/whatismet.htm.

In short; **"Metadata is a component of data which describes the data. It is "data about data."** Metadata describes the content, quality, condition, and other characteristics of data. Metadata describes the who, what, when, where, why, and how about a data set. Without proper documentation a data set is incomplete. **Metadata is critical to preserving the usefulness of data over time.** For instance, metadata captures important information on how the data were collected and/or processed so that future users of that data understand these details. Another vital function metadata serves is as a record in search systems so that users can locate data sets of interest."

If the body of human knowledge, pre and post history, could be accessed, cataloged, derived and accessed, that would be something that would interest me intensely. This also begs the question, "Could future datasets be accessed as well?" Interesting questions, indeed and ones that I'm still deciphering the answer to. The results so far are represented by huge amounts of data which I am currently working on interpreting. I am also working with a group of people to upgrade the components to make the process faster, smarter and more manageable. The computing power needed to run this system is rather great so I have fallen back and started to redesign the core of the system to rely on distributed computing models, making the entire scenario much more elegant.

NWD: Your next book is about your adventures in the mind control underground. What's your take on the mind control subculture? Any interesting run-ins with people claiming that their minds are being zapped?

JM: My take on the mind control subculture—hmmmm. I guess at the heart of it all, I truly believe that there have been some projects run by various organizations to manipulate and control human behavior. However, my personal experience is that for the most part, the so-called Mind Control Subculture is mostly made up of individuals who are either looking for a cop-out for their own behavior or trying to manipulate said individuals for profit, ego and power reasons. Have I had run-ins with such critters? Indeed? Am I going to bother to give them any juice by mentioning them? I think not—

Suffice it to say, I've learned my lesson. Study these people at arms length if you feel that you must but do not let them into your field, nor pity them too much. Ultimately we are all responsible for and capable of overcoming our own demons. 'nuff said.

NWD: Writers on the Montauk project seem to cover many of the same ideas as Ong's Hat: time/interdimensional travel, secret government projects, etc. and Peter Moon, author of Montauk books, wrote the intro to *Ong's Hat: The Beginning*. Is there a Ong's Hat-Montauk connection? Any thoughts on the Montauk meme?

JM: In my mind, no, there's no real connection. If there's anything that ties the two legends together it's that they represent opposite polarities of a similar type of story. Montauk is about victimization and exploitation at its core. Ong's Hat is about self sufficiency, DIY mentality and liberation of the spirit. That is my conclusion after studying the two threads and possibilities of relations between the two. What other people write or think is not for me to dictate. I will however leave you with this notaricon: T.F.Y.Q.A.

Think For Yourself, Question Authority.